

**Content Analysis of the Reading and Thinking Section of the
Second Period Persian Elementary School Books from the
Perspective of Authority and Freedom**

Ali Shiravani Shiri

Department of Educational Sciences,
Farhangian University, Tehran, Iran

Majid Kowsari

Department of Educational Sciences,
Farhangian University, Tehran, Iran

Abbas Abbasi Chelcheleh

MA in Educational Sciences,
Farhangian University, Tehran, Iran

Introduction

Educational content is one of the main elements in the learning process in the educational system. In fact, educational content can be considered as a link between educational goals and a set of knowledges, insights, and skills. The use of stories as part of the content of Persian textbooks has been common in formal and public education. Since stories are cherished by students, they are used as suitable vehicles to convey moral concepts, cultural and social customs and even scientific concepts in elementary school textbooks.

One of the most important and effective sections in the Persian elementary school textbooks is the “Reading and Thinking” section, which is presented by focusing on a story suitable for the audience. Such a story is included in the category of children's literature. One of the basic challenges in the field of children's literature is how to communicate between the adult author of these works and the child audience. In fact, it is a challenge for the author to refrain from applying his/her opinions and imposing his/her wishes in the creation of the stories in order to respect children’s freedom in creating meaning and having their own opinions.

Therefore, the main questions are to what extent is this challenge observed in the stories in the Persian textbooks of the second grade of elementary school? Have the authors of these stories paid attention to these educational aspects of the stories? To what extent have the authors paid attention to the children’s freedom in understanding the stories and interpreting them?

Methodology and Review of Literature

This research is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-analytical in terms of method. The content analyzed in this research included 18 stories from the reading and thinking section of the second period Persian elementary school books, i.e. the fourth, fifth and sixth grades in the academic year of 2022-2023. The sampling method was purposeful and descriptive statistics was used for data analysis.

Clementine (2015) addresses the theoretical debate around structures of time and power and acknowledges that children's literature is relentlessly prescriptive, autocratic and authoritarian. In fact, in

children's books, it is generally tried to paint a world for children that is harmonious and devoid of unpleasant facts as they are meant to maintain a multifaceted "illusion" of security, order and nostalgic order. Farnia (2009) studies the concept of power in the works of Roald Dahl and Lewis Carroll in his master's thesis and points to the importance of such concepts as power and empowerment in all areas of life. He comes to the conclusion that people who are older try to control and dominate the lives of younger people, especially children. Despite the fact that there have been researches in various fields of Persian textbooks for the primary level, serious attention has not been paid to such important issues as authority and freedom. In this research, the categories of authority and freedom and their manifestations in the stories of Reading and Thinking section of Persian school books for the second grade of primary school have been investigated.

Discussion

In all the analyzed stories, there is no ambiguity in recognizing and understanding the idea that governs the story, and the audience does not need to decode the message. The obviousness of the theme takes away from the reader the opportunity and the possibility of personal judgment and perception; therefore, the theme of the stories can be considered authoritarian.

Although we are faced with predetermined goals in textbooks in a centralized educational system, the analysis of the stories of the Reading and Thinking section based on the story elements and their manifestation types showed that both liberating and authoritarian

components are present in the story. In this respect, there is no distinction in the stories of the Reading and Thinking section of different grades (4th, 5th and 6th).

Conclusion

The findings showed that among the 104 cases (the ways of presenting story elements) identified in the studied books, 64.4% emphasized the freedom components and 35.6% emphasized authority components. The results of the research show that the authors of the stories have paid more attention to the components of freedom, which is the basis for the children's movement from dependence to intellectual independence and decision-making power.

According to the results of the research, and taking into account the high potentials of stories for cognitive, emotional, psychological, aesthetic, moral and educational development of children, it is recommended that the lesson-planners and the authors of the textbooks be more meticulous in choosing stories for elementary school books. It is also suggested to the authors of children's stories to pay attention to the educational impacts of their work while formulating and choosing the type and the elements of the stories because the appropriate use of story elements and the quality of their expression not only enhance the pleasure of reading, but also help to create movement and dynamism in the mind of the children.

Key words: elementary school, content analysis, Persian textbook, authority, freedom

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